WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY – Founded December 19, 1857

April

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We would like to ask all of you with green thumbs to start cutting, slipping and propagating plants for the Annual Katherine Groomes Plant sale. By starting now our plants should be rather sizable by September and the bigger they are the better prices we can ask. Also we need one or two people to head up this project. If you would like to chair the project or work on the committee, please call me at 663-5098. I would be delighted to hear from you.

Thomas F. Lacy

GENEALOGY GROUP TO HOST STATE MEETING SEPT. 9-11

The Genealogy Section of WCHS will be host next fall to its first large conference on genealogy sponsored by the Michigan Genealogical Council. It will be the weekend of September 9 through 11 at Eastern Michigan University Conference Center.

The state council currently has 16 affiliated societies. Similar meetings in the past have attracted attendance from several states.

ANN ARBOR CO. A FLAGS RESTORED, TO BE DISPLAYED

The century-old tattered flags of Ann Arbor's Co. A, First Regiment of Michigan State Troops, have been restored by WCHS and will be on display in May in the main office of Ann Arbor Federal Savings & Loan.

The Michigan State Troops preceded the National Guard. The local company was organized in 1868. The flag, bearing the state seal, is back-to-back with a 38-star United States flag. The U.S. flag had 38 stars by 1876.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society– Mrs. Charlotte Whitney of Olivet will speak on restorations at 8 p.m. Monday, May 9, at the Congregational Church.

Dexter Historical Society– Museum, 3443 Inverness St., open 1-3 p.m. every Tuesday and the second Saturday of each month.

Milan Historical Society– Meets third Wednesday of month at 7:30 p.m. at Milan Community House.

Salem Historical Society– 1 p.m. Saturday, April 30. Trip to Northville to see the millrace and the former one-room Wash Oak School which was moved from Salem Township.

Saline Historical Society– 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 17, in Blue Lounge of Saline High School. Election of officers.

Ypsilanti Historical Society– In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Charles Lindbergh's historic flight May 21, 1927, the museum will have an aviation exhibit from 2-4 p.m. May 21 and 22. Victor Tidswell, a pilot, will be on hand with his aviation scrapbooks to talk with visitors.

"Trash and Treasure" sale from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 4, to benefit musuem. Location not certain at press time but probably either in the carriage house behind the museum at 220 N. Huron St. or the old fire house nearby.

EXHIBIT BEING PREPARED

An exhibit of old local photographs is being prepared for display in the Gandy Dancer Restaurant, the former Michigan Central Railroad Depot. It is a cooperative effort involving WCHS and Ann Arbor Federal. Sam Sturgis is enlarging the pictures and Prof. Leigh Anderson will frame them.

EXTRA!

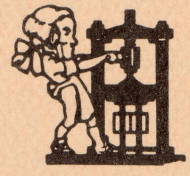
READ ALL ABOUT IT!

EX-JOURNALIST TO DISCUSS OLD NEWSPAPER COLLECTION

David Pollock, executive assistant to the president of Washtenaw Community College and a former journalist, will talk about his personal collection of old newspapers at the WCHS meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 28, in Liberty Hall.

The collection dates back to 1666 and contains the famous copy of the Chicago Daily Tribune which mistakenly announced "Dewey Wins" in the 1948 presidential election.

Pollock, the son of an Indiana newspaper editor, minored in journalism at the U-M and worked in the U-M Information Service and Community Relations offices before going to WCC.



JUDGE CAMPBELL TO DISCUSS RESEARCH IN COURT RECORDS

Circuit Judge Ross W. Campbell will speak to the Genealogy Section at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, April 24, in the new Learning Materials Center Building at Washtenaw Community College. He will talk about use of court records, especially probate records, in genealogical research. A help session is planned at 1 p.m. It is open to all interested persons.

THAYER TO DISCUSS CIRCUS, COBBLESTONE CONTRACTOR

Two topics, the contractor who built Cobblestone Farm house and the Ringling Brothers Circus will both be discussed at the May 26 meeting of WCHS by Vice-President Stuart Thayer.

Huron River – The Old Millstream

The Huron River, today a recreational and scenic asset, once powered many mills. Much earlier the French explorer LaSalle paddled down it, the first European to penetrate the wilderness of the present Washtenaw County.

Wystan Stevens, local historian and photographer, presented a pictorial journey down the river to Ann Arbor at the March WCHS meeting. Using two screens and two slide projectors he contrasted present and former scenes.

Traces of those 19th century mills can still be found if you look carefully, he said. So far as he knows the Huron River mills used turbines, not waterwheels.

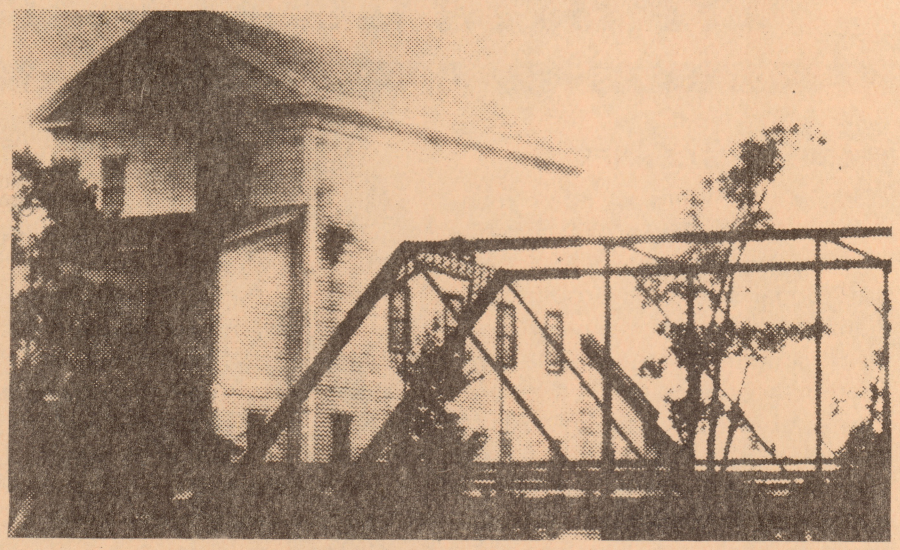
The river enters the county from Base Lake near Portage Lake. The lake is on the horizontal "base line" from which all land in Michigan was measured. To the east it becomes Eight Mile Road.

One of the county's four surviving iron truss bridges is at Bell Road, built by the Wrought Iron Bridge Co. of Canton, Ohio, in 1891.

Next is Territorial Road, one of the main roads of Michigan Territory. From the decaying 1920 concrete bridge there, you can see remains of the dam at Hudson Mills, now a park unit of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority. The river channel bisects the dam on either side.

An historical marker notes that mill remains (stone foundation walls) are visible across the river and says the Birkett Manufacturing Co. acquired it in 1882. The 1874 county atlas, however, says Thomas Birkett owned it at least eight years earlier.

The large body of water in downtown Dexter is not the river but Mill Creek which flows into the Huron there. An 1868 photo shows the mill which was there into the 1950's. In 1868 it was operated by Evarts and Co., later by Birkett and the Blanchards.



Pictures courtesy of Ann Arbor Federal except as noted.

The Delhi Grist Mill, like many others once along the Huron River, is gone except for a little of the stone foundations by the Delhi Rapids. The iron truss bridge there is one of four still surviving in the county.

An interior shot showed the Blanchards standing by grain hoppers, the machinery with moving belts, and wooden ducts to channel the grain from the top of the building.

Robert Cavalier Sieur De LaSalle encountered the Huron at Dexter in April 1680. He and his party had hoped to meet the first sailing vessel on the Great Lakes, the Griffin, at what is now Niles but it never came. What happened to it is one of the great mysteries of Michigan history. Giving up waiting, LaSalle started overland across the bottom of the mitten. At the Huron they made a canoe of elm bark loosened with hot water and continued past the future site of Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti where matted logs and brush stopped them. They continued on foot.

Just off W. Huron River Drive at Camp Newkirk near Dexter a mound of another mill dam can be seen. The mill was at Mast Road across the river from the present Wagner Cider Mill. An old postcard shows a path on the mound that separated the headrace from the river called "Lover's Lane."

Here was one of two iron truss bridges we lost in our Bicentennial year, he noted. It was built in the 1890's by the Masillon Bridge Co. of Ohio. It is being replaced by an ordinary four-lane highway bridge.

Passing Dexter-Huron Park, we come to Zeeb Road where there was a mill at the little hamlet of Scio. Only rocks in the stream remain but if we follow the river back a little we can find some of the old dam, overgrown with trees and brush and beer cans.

Next was Delhi Mills, a temperance village in the 19th century. An 1874 county atlas drawing shows a brick woolen factory and frame grist mill. Owners Goodale and Henley sold lots only to people who pledged never to sell liquor on their premises.

The islands with trees are the remains of the dam. The so-called rapids are mostly the scattered stones from the foundations, he said.

Part of the woolen factory wall is visible on one side of the river, tucked under weeds and ivy. On the other side, a wall segment is mostly reduced to a pile of rocks.

He regrets that HCMA hasn't tried to preserve the remains.

There is an iron bridge at Delhi, built by the Canton Bridge Co. There was also a wrought iron bridge at Tubbs Road until about ten years ago and one at Zeeb Road until 1962.

Upstream from Tubbs Road are the Huron River Drive and railroad bridges. Looking upstream from the latter, the site of the Osborne Mill can be seen.

"It's amazing how many mills there were on this one river," he said.

There are only a few rocks in the stream from the dam but part of the headrace is visible. It stops where the railroad bridge was raised 50 to 60 years ago. It used to continue several hundred feet past Tubbs Road to the mill where the turbine shaft is visible. This area is now the Osborne Nature Preserve recently purchased by the Washtenaw Land Conservancy to be kept wild forever.

At N. Maple Road, once known as Foster Station or Newport, is the longest of the four surviving iron truss bridges. It's a terrible bottleneck to commuters, but it ought to stay there, he believes. The bridge was patented November 24, 1876, though not necessarily built then, by the Wrought Iron Bridge Co. of Canton.

The railroad tracks were realigned much closer to the river than originally in 1840-41. Much of Huron River Drive follows the original roadbed. Evidence of it is also visible in a cut in the hill at the end of Warrington Road in a nearby subdivision.

Foster Station had a woolen factory and wool storage house on one side and a brown wrapping paper factory across the bridge.

Mrs. Groomes used to tell about her uncle who was a foreman in the paper factory. "It was one of those horrible 19th century factories in which everything ran from belts off a drive shaft," he said. Her uncle reached up to untangle something and lost both his arms. He spent the rest of his life without arms and ate from the edge of the table, she said.

Some mill ruins can be seen at low water. Right next to the bridge on the Barton Hills side, the circular base of the chimney is visible as well as the outlets which returned water to the river. Foundations are visible at the lowest water levels.

After the Eastern Michigan Edison Co. bought the riparian rights there, they had the problem of what to do with the scrub land along the banks. He thinks it was Mrs. Underdown who had the idea of developing it as a residential suburb of Ann Arbor.

Across the river was the water-works before it was moved up the hill to Sunset Road. There is still a little pumping station there.

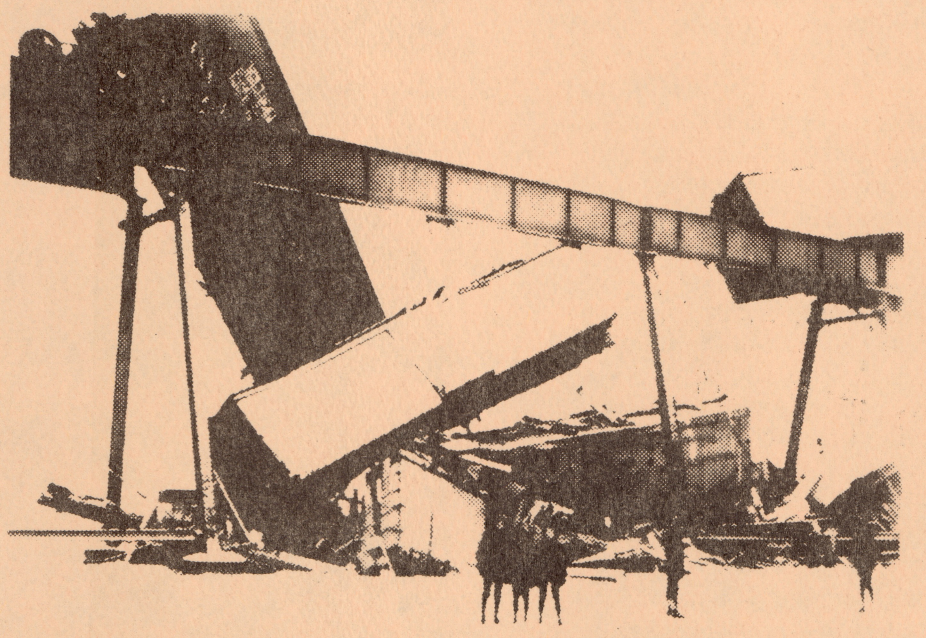
The Barton Dam Powerhouse symbolizes the second phase of river development, he said. First the power was harnessed for grist mills and factories, then Edison used it for electricity, and now the river is thought of as parkland. Huron-Clinton park development began in the 1930's. More recently the City of Ann Arbor bought the Edison properties down to Superior near Ypsilanti. A continuous park is planned.

The Barton Powerhouse, one of the early examples of poured concrete construction here, has been described by architectural historians as a fortress. In Edison photos, now at Bentley Library, Ernie Allmendinger, the former U-M All-American football player of Ann Arbor, is shown as a college student operating a slip scraper during construction of Barton Dam. The present dam was built in 1971 following the 1968 flood.

A millstone that Eli Gallup, former parks department head, had in his back yard is now stored outside the powerhouse. It is not certain from which mill it came, he said.

A sign on the powerhouse says it has been proposed as a museum of the natural and cultural history of the Huron River. It would be ideal, he thinks.

The Cornwell dam and mill was erected below the Girl Scouts' Hill-top Lodge where Huron River Drive turns to meet North Main Street. The dam, erected in 1885, was blasted about ten years later after the Argo mill owners successfully sued for decreasing their flowage. The mill burned in 1914. If you poke around there you can see a



Ann Arbor railroad builder Ashley skimped on this iron trestle across the Huron, Stevens said. The trains got heavier and this is what happened in 1904. One of the cars was loaded with Beeman's pepsin gum. Some of it was salvaged by an enterprising young man, Ray Spokes, and sold to classmates at Jones School.

Courtesy of Wystan Stevens

piece of the wall and stones from the dam and foundation.

Along the river on N. Main Street there were the Hangsterfer Ice House, Machine Specialty Products, Economy Baler Co., and a stockyard. Hangsterfer ran an elegant ballroom downtown on the site of the Kiddieland store and collected his own ice. Machine Specialty, which evolved into Argus Cameras, once made the Zeta Radio. (Hazel Proctor of the society recently bought one of those radios for preservation.) Economy Baler had a large sign, "World's Largest Baling Press Manufacturers."

Canoeing and fishing were popular in the 19th century too. Pilings of the Tessmer U-M Huron River Canoe Livery can be seen at low water across from the present city canoe livery. The old livery was moved across the river and became the Wirth canoe livery, later demolished.

The Ann Arbor Railroad headed north across the river on a log trestle in 1878. An iron trestle replaced it in 1891. Unfortunately, Mr. Ashley, who built the railroad and for whom a street is named, skimped on materials to save money.

The trains got larger and one day in 1905 a train crashed through onto frozen Argo pond. As a kid, Ray Spokes of the society, read that one of the cars was loaded with Beeman's pepsin gum. He got a lot of it one night, took it to his grandmother's house on High Street to dry it in the oven and sold it at Jones School.

Railroad car wheels from that wreck were still in the pond in 1971, Stevens said, as well as caissons and posts from the two earlier trestles. This brought to mind the 1950's anecdote of the man who ran a sailboat aground on a boxcar in Argo pond.

The outlet of Allen's Creek, named for John Allen, one of the founders of Ann Arbor, can be seen from the trestle. The creek paralleled the Ann Arbor railroad tracks through town and was put in a pipe in 1926.

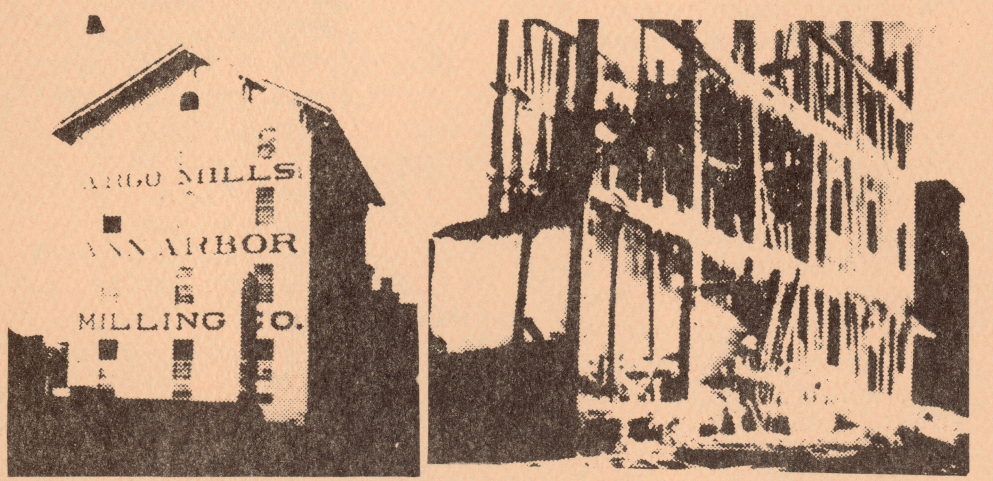
The old Argo dam near the trestle was of boards and stones. The millrace dates from 1826 or 1827. Lower town was developed in 1832. The old Argo dam served a woolen mill, Sinclair grist mill on Broadway and Ann Arbor Agricultural Works across the street where the Edison warehouse is now. Also near Broadway was the artificial gas works with large round storage tanks and the Michigan Central Railroad depot, now the Gandy Dancer Restaurant.

The Argo mill exploded and burned in the winter of 1905. The Edison Co. substation replaced it the same year. A ramp on the tailrace leads to Riverside Park where the Goddard elm stood until it died about a year ago. Nearby a two-unit iron truss bridge collapsed into the river in 1909.

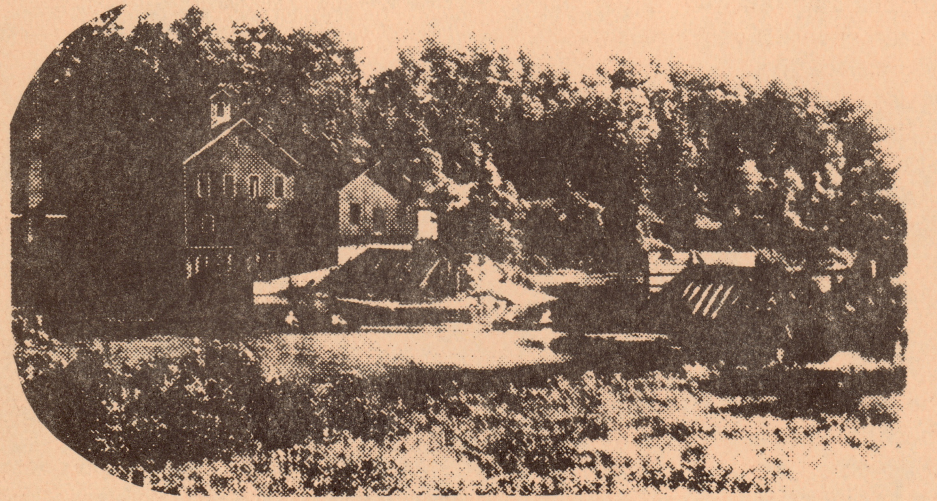
Next is Island Park, the city's first, developed during the "city beautiful" movement at the turn of the century, with its elaborate former comfort station at the tip of the island with Ionic columns and Palladian front.

Old post cards show the "old" and "new" boulevards near there. The old was the hairpin turn area on Cedar Bend Drive, the new was Glen Drive in the Arboretum then called "School Girls Glen."

Down the river was the 1893 iron bridge in Gallup Park, the second one lost last year. Nearby is the Huron Parkway Bridge built in 1965.



Argo Mills before it exploded and burned in 1904 (left) and ice encrusted framework after the fire. The Detroit Edison's Argo substation replaced it the same year on Broadway in Lower Town.



Cornwell Mills was erected in 1885 below the present Girl Scouts' Hilltop Lodge. The dam was broken in the 1890's after the nearby Argo Mill owners successfully sued Cornwell for reducing their flowage.

THE CASE OF THE ILL-GOTTEN ELM
OR THERE'S A LITTLE LARCENY IN THE BEST OF US

It is well known that Ann Arbor is a city that prides itself on its trees. Even its name may refer to a shady bower of interlaced oak branches rather than a grape arbor.

But not all of its trees were scrupulously obtained. Some were swiped, even by some University professors, according to a long-time former resident, Fred Bishop of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Bishop, a retired engineer, came to Ann Arbor in 1905 as a schoolboy and graduated from the old Ann Arbor High School in 1911. He recalls some incidents in which some tree swipers were frustrated many years ago. He shared them in a recent letter to the Washtenaw County Historical Society.

At the time of the first incident, the Huron High School site was farm fields and a woodlot. It was all presided over by a sharp-eyed German farmer named Wiedman who lived across Fuller Road in the old cobblestone house now occupied by the Hodges. (Nan Hodges is the one who has done a great deal of research on the Cobblestone Farm project on the Campbell-Ticknor farm on Packard Road.)

Mr. Wiedman "was of the same German stock which had settled most of Washtenaw County and his sense of honesty and decency was not to be trifled with," Bishop writes.

One Saturday morning he had hitched his horse to a buggy in preparation for a trip to town and was standing in his front yard when he noticed some activity over in the woodlot, Bishop relates.

Two men in a buggy had driven into the lot which was not fenced and, after selecting a nice young elm tree, they took some shovels out of the buggy and started digging it up.

Wiedman watched with interest as the men carefully placed the tree in the back of the buggy and drove away toward Geddes Road. (Geddes Road then crossed the river at what is now called Gallup Park Drive.)

Wiedman followed the men "at a discreet distance to see where they were going. The strangers crossed the bridge and drove up the hill and into town on Geddes Avenue and eventually into the yard of a very fine home on Washtenaw Avenue."

"Mr. Wiedman stopped his horse at the side of the street a half block away and continued his observations.

"The two strangers dug a very fine hole in the front yard, planted their purloined tree, backfilled it and applied water to complete a good job."

At that, Wiedman drove into the yard and said, "That is a nice tree you have there. Where did you get it?"

They replied, "Oh, we got it from a woods across the river."

The conversation thereafter was about as follows:

Mr. W.: "Did you ask the owner if you could have the tree?"

"No, we didn't know who owned the woods."

Mr. W.: "Did you inquire in the neighborhood as to who the owner might be?"

"No."

Mr. W.: "Well, I am the owner, and I stood in my front yard and watched you go into my woodlot and dig up the tree."

The tree planters then said, "Oh, we will pay you for the tree."

Mr. W.: "No, it is too late for that. Now I will tell you just what to do. If you had come to me and asked for a tree, I would have been glad to give it to you. Since you did not you will now dig up the tree and take it back to my woodlot where you got it and plant it right back in the hole from which you dug it."

The strangers said, "Oh, we can't do that."

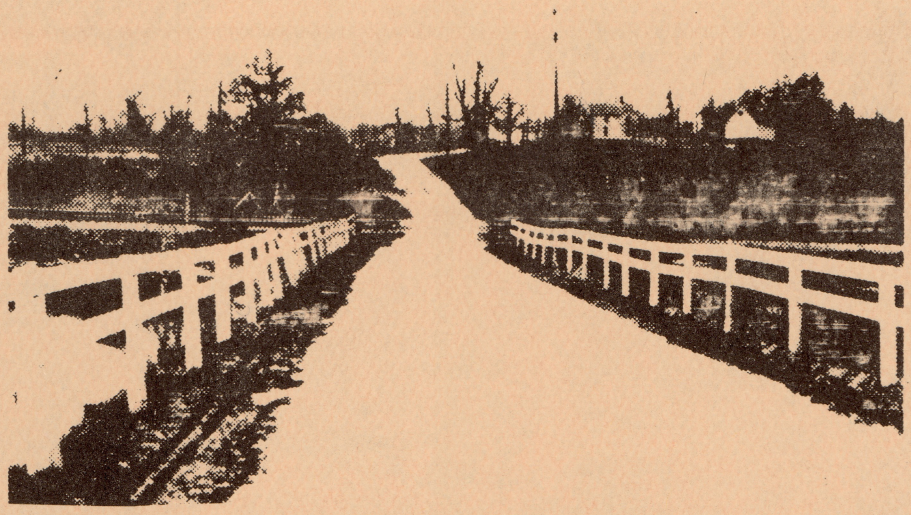
Mr. W.: "If you don't want to do that, I will just go downtown and swear out a warrant for theft against you."

This sobered the tree stealers who then agreed to replant the tree. They pulled it up and took it back to the Wiedman woodlot with Wiedman accompanying them to supervise the job.

"One of the tree planters was a professor in the University," Bishop writes.

Bishop's father who owned a farm at 2505 Geddes Avenue had a similar experience later. The farm was being subdivided and a street was laid out. "A newly hired professor from some other city who was building a house came out and dug up several small evergreen

These are some of Ann Arbor's trees on Washtenaw Avenue in 1920. We've all heard of student pranks of earlier days. Now read this about a couple of their mentors, mercifully nameless, who weren't above a little tree pilfering if they thought no one was looking



It wasn't really a Hollywood chase but the tree-nappers went that-a-way—across the river and up Geddes Avenue hill to town, unaware they were being followed by the irate tree owner. Today they couldn't get through with their horse and buggy. A maze of barriers blocks all but pedestrians and cyclists from leaving Gallup Park there.

trees from along the street, spruces, white pines, etc.

Bishop's father did not follow Wiedman's example but the trees were taken in midsummer, "the wrong time of the year to plant evergreens, and they all died in a month after they were moved. Poetic justice," Bishop says.

The moral of this story is that Arbor Day, on the last Friday in April or thereabouts, is a good time to plant trees but be careful where you get them.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Keylining: Anna Thorsch
Printing and Typesetting: Courtesy of Ann Arbor Federal Savings and Drury, Lacy, Inc.

CHERRY BUREAU-DESK COMES FULL CIRCLE IN 100 YEARS

A large cherry bureau-desk repaired on Detroit Street in Ann Arbor came full circle back there after 100 years in Dexter, Owosso and Jackson. Mrs. Travis Cash, owner of the Treasure Mart on Detroit Street, has given it to WCHS.

One drawer pulls down for a desk. On the bottom of a small drawer inside is a business card saying "Ann Arbor Cooperative Furniture Co., G. B. Schwab, Sec'y., J. Volz, Sup't., C. Volz, Treas., Factory on Detroit Street, Salesroom 35-37 S. Main St." "September 1877" is handwritten indicating it was repaired there then. It was repaired again in Owosso July 8, 1929.

Under the business card is an ornate signature which may be of the man who made it. It looks like Samuel Andrew Geneoa. The bureau was part of an estate in Jackson. Old city directories do not list the Cooperative Furniture Co.

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 96
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Washtenaw
Historical Society
Meeting
THURSDAY
8:00 P.M.
LIBERTY HALL
ANN ARBOR FEDERAL SAVINGS
LIBERTY AT DIVISION
April 28, 1977

Miss Eileen Harrison
322 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, Mi. 48197